

FRANKFORD ARSENAL, Building 35
South of Tacony Street between Bridge
Street and the tracks of the former
Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-74-A

HAER
PA,
51-PHILA,
693-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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Location: South of Tacony Street between Bridge Street and the tracks of the former Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

UTM: NW: E494120N4428480
NE: E494780 N4428750
SE: E495120 N4428260
SW: E494190 NEE28140
Quad: Frankford

Date of Construction: 1816-1976

Present Owner: Arsenal Associates
P.O. Box 26767
Elkins Park, PA 19117

Present Use: Vacant, industrial, offices

Significance: Established in 1816, the Frankford Arsenal served for three decades as a depot for the storage and repair of arms, accoutrements, and ammunition for the United States Army. From 1849 to 1976, the arsenal served as the nation's principal developer and manufacturer of small arms and artillery munitions. Frankford Arsenal pioneered mechanized production of munitions and developed numerous important innovations in ordnance and precision instruments. Technological innovations introduced at Frankford Arsenal made important contributions to the mechanization of American industry and the implementation of interchangeability and mass production techniques.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in August 1988 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement among the General Services Administration, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of several buildings at Frankford Arsenal.

Patrick O'Bannon
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John Milner Associates, Inc.
1216 Arch Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Erected in 1860, Building 35 initially served as the boiler house for the arsenal's first manufacturing building, the Percussion Cap Factory (Building 38), constructed immediately south of Building 35 in the same year.

The original building is a five-bay, single-story brick building, measuring approximately 52 feet by 28 feet. Iron, Fink trusses supported a gabled roof. A 13-foot single story brick addition extended the building to the north. The addition has a shallow-pitched shed roof and a molded metal cornice. In ca. 1906, the building's south wall was demolished and a two-bay, 17-foot-long addition was constructed. This addition utilized the building's original pattern of fenestration, and introduced a round-headed entry with a six-light fanlight into the south facade. In 1941, a single-story, flat-roofed brick addition, measuring approximately 14 feet by 34 feet, was constructed against the original east facade.

The building, which presently measures approximately 79 feet by 28 feet, has a gabled, corrugated metal roof with ridge ventilators and skylights. Fink trusses, some original to the building, support the roof. Window openings are rectangular, with twelve-over-twelve and nine-over-nine sash. The interior of the building is largely open, with plastered walls and exposed roof trusses.

In ca. 1875, Building 35 was converted from a boiler house into a blacksmith shop. It functioned as a blacksmith shop until at least 1955. In 1976, at the closure of the arsenal, it functioned as a Skill Development Center. The building's significance stems from its association with the Percussion Cap Factory, one of the first manufacturing operations at Frankford Arsenal, and for its early use of wrought iron Fink roof trusses, an engineering and architectural innovation that permitted an open plan free from posts and columns.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Milner Associates, "Historical and Archeological Survey of Frankford Arsenal," West Chester, PA: John Milner Associates, 1979.

Report prepared for the Department of the Army, Baltimore District, Corps of Engineers, Baltimore, Maryland. Copies on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Frec Library of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

For complete overview of site, see HAER No. PA-74.

